

PROGRAM POLICY COORDINATION WORKGROUP MINUTES

**February 12, 2004
Dane County Job Center**

Attendees:

Carol Amelong, DHFS/BIMA
Autumn Arnold, DHFS/Prg. Participation Grant
Shirin Cabraal, LAW
Jonathan Bader, WISCAP
Sara Edmonds, DHFS/BHCE
Sara Edmonds, DHFS/BHCE
Janet Even, DHFS/Prg. Participation Grant
Kathy Judd, Dane County/State Training
Pam Kiern, BHCE/CARES
John LaPhillip, BHCE/DHCF

Julie Loebel, BHCE/Outreach Training
Carol Medaris, WCCF
Sue Moline-Larson, LOPP
Mary Moyer, BHCE/MA Policy
Michelle Pauser, DHFS/Call Center
Linda Preyz, DWD/W-2
Scott Riedasch, BHCE/DHCF
Sara Shackleton, Dane County
Sheryl Siegl, Winnebago County DHS

Program Participation Grant

Janet Even and Autumn Arnold

Janet Even and Autumn Arnold began the meeting with an update on Food Stamp Program Participation Grant progress. Autumn provided several handouts that summarize the team's activities so far and provide a timeline for future activities. Currently they are meeting with focus groups and getting good input from community stakeholders. Focus group findings will be used to develop the requirements for the web-based screening tool.

Autumn asked this group for input on some terminology issues as well, such as how to differentiate between Medicaid and Medicare, how to differentiate between SSI and Social Security, whether or not to inform users about ineligibility of certain household members (i.e. undocumented aliens). Discussion followed.

Autumn also shared suggested names for the customer service toolbox. The two most popular with the focus groups so far have been "AMIE (AM I Eligible?)" and "Self-Help Wisconsin." Carol suggested that we avoid "cute" names, such as AMIE. This group favored Self-Help Wisconsin.

A handout summarizing focus group findings indicated a confirmation of some things the team had already suspected, among which were:

- keep the screening tool short –users said they would be willing to spend 15 minutes using it
- screen for all programs
- have a feature showing the user how far they were in the process
- have a feature that would allow the user to save their answers and return to finish later

Clients and service providers have been very excited about the screening tool and would tell their friends about it when it becomes available. They suggested having the public access points in private locations, so that the information they are entering is out of the visibility range of people waiting in line to use it. Jonathan and Carol M. recommended that there be "helpers" who could assist users in public locations. Discussion followed on how to inform a user about what the results mean. We don't want to "screen out" someone who may actually be eligible but whose results indicate probable ineligibility. It was also strongly recommended that a Spanish version be created.

Linda mentioned that DWD had done an extensive review of other screening tools last summer. Some had extremely accurate results, but they included 100 or more questions. Discussion centered around just how comprehensive this tool should be. Autumn reminded us that clients indicated they only want to spend about 15 minutes on the process.

Reduced Reporting

Sara Edmonds

Sara Edmonds provided an update on reduced change reporting. Operations Memo 04-06 is coming out on Friday. The link for the Operations Memo is (this will also direct you to a draft copy of the SMIRF): http://www.dhfs.state.wi.us/em/ops_memos/2004/default.htm One issue to be resolved is the difference in terminology. Federal language refers to "Food Stamp households," while state language refers to "food units."

Sara provided the first draft of a reminder notice that will go out to customers a month before the SMIRF goes out. The first batch of notices will go out in May. This is just the preliminary version of the form, and Sara asked for feedback from this group. She has not had time to begin to simplify the language yet. Jonathan offered to work on this and an electronic copy is forwarded with these minutes to the group. Sara would like everyone's feedback on the notice.

Sara also reported that the first Transitional Food Stamps are expected to go out April 1. An Ops Memo should be coming out around February 20th describing TFS. Sara Shackleton indicated that the more time local staff have to be trained on the process, the better it will work.

Medical Assistance for Released Inmates

John LaPhillip

John LaPhillip reported on the progress of the Medicaid for Former Inmates initiative. April 1 is the tentative date for the program to begin, at which time DOC will begin their part of the process. An Ops Memo should be coming out toward the end of February or early March. He briefly reviewed the process, which was provided to the group in a handout in November.

Counties will be asked to provide a list of contact people who will be handling these applications. DOC needs to be able to communicate with county workers on these cases. A state trainer will be working with DOC staff on how to file the applications.

Jonathan asked what will happen to those who are not determined to meet the disability definition. A short discussion ensued regarding other resources that might be available in communities to help these customers get their medications.

Annuities Policy Clarification

Scott Riedasch

Scott handed out a copy of Ops Memo 04-03, which was published today, describing the new way of treating annuities. You can view this Operations Memo at: http://www.dhfs.state.wi.us/em/ops_memos/2004/default.htm This group had previously discussed the new policy and some had recommended that a cap be put on the amount to be treated in the new way. Jonathan stated that a precedent on caps had been set in the vehicle policy, when vehicles valued at \$4500 or more were counted as assets, but those valued at less than \$4500 were not.

Scott said that the decision of BHCE was that a cap was not a good idea. The asset either is or is not available. The policy needed to be implemented as quickly as possible, since it is part of the budget and should have been effective January 1st. Discussion centered on how many cases actually were abusing the policy. Shirin suggested that CARES collect data on cases with annuities and review the results in the future.

Scott indicated that the policy only affects annuities purchased on or after the effective date; it is not retroactive. Copies of the Ops Memo will go out to Elder Law attorneys and county benefit specialists. Annuities are the only asset like this to be exempted in this way.

Funeral & Cemetery Aids Program**Scott Riedasch**

Scott also handed out a draft discussion paper on the Funeral and Cemetery Aids Program. When this program was moved over to DHFS it became a sum-certain program, and there is a financial shortfall of around ½ million dollars. Scott would like this group to review the discussion paper, which includes comments from many counties, and get their feedback to him by the end of the month. His email address is riedasa@dhfs.state.wi.us. There was a short discussion about whether or not this program should become centralized. Could doing so be cost-effective? Would doing so remove availability of other options that counties could present? (E.g., sometimes disability applications can be sent in to DDB on the deceased; if they are approved, and the person met other Medicaid eligibility requirements, the funeral could be retroactively paid for by this program. Would this procedure be lost if it were centralized?)

Other items:

Shirin asked what counties do about Medicaid overpayments. A general discussion followed on how counties handle them. Scott indicated that state law allows recovery of overpayments if the incorrect payment results from any misstatement or omission of fact by a person supplying information at application or review. The department may also recover if an overpayment results from the failure to report changes in income or assets in an amount that would have affected the recipient's eligibility for benefits.

Respectfully submitted by Sheryl Siegl

Next Meeting - Thursday, March 11, 2004 - 12:30 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. at GEF III, Room 041